

Sample preparation and submission

- Use NCDA&CS soil sample boxes, label them completely and fill with soil to the red line.
- Complete the appropriate sample information form using permanent ink or pencil. You must list a crop or crop code in order to get lime and fertilizer recommendations. Forms are available from NCDA&CS regional agronomists, Cooperative Extension offices, the Agronomic Division office in Raleigh and online at www.ncagr.com/agronomi/forms.htm.
- Package the sample appropriately. Do not tape the soil sample box or put soil in a plastic bag. If sending several sample boxes through the mail, pack them carefully in a sturdy container, and mail them to the address given on the back of this publication. Detailed packaging instructions are available at www.ncagr.com/agronomi/pdf/files/packsoil.pdf.

The soil test report

Soil test results are mailed to the client and to the advisor(s) listed on the *Soil Sample Information* form. However, it is often more convenient to look for the report on the Agronomic Division's Web site www.ncagr.com/agronomi, where it is posted as soon as analysis is complete. Reports remain online for about three fiscal years, and data can be downloaded into a spreadsheet.

If you have questions about sampling procedure or need help interpreting a report, consult your NCDA&CS regional agronomist or other agricultural advisor. Additional information about soil tests and their interpretation is also available online at www.ncagr.com/agronomi/uyrst.htm.

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture

Agronomic Division

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Raleigh NC 27699-1040**

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**4300 Reedy Creek Road
Raleigh NC 27607-6465**

*For more information on
sampling, interpreting agronomic reports or
implementing recommendations,
contact your NCDA&CS regional agronomist
or other agricultural advisor.*

Agronomic Sampling
Folder No. 2

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Soil Sampling Large Areas: Agricultural Crops, Pastures, Parks or Athletic Turf

The goal of soil sampling a large area is to collect a sample that provides good representation for the entire area. These guidelines may help.

Before sampling a large area, it is a good idea to make a detailed map. Copies of aerial photographs from soil surveys may be helpful. Divide the map into individual sample areas of 20 acres or less. Each unique area should ideally have similar soil type, planting history and management history.

Assign a short, permanent sample identifier to each unique area using appropriate FARM ID and SAMPLE ID designations that will help you remember the location. Keep in mind that the SAMPLE ID space on the soil box is limited to five characters.

Always use clean, stainless-steel sampling equipment and a clean, plastic bucket. Brass, bronze or galvanized tools contaminate the sample with copper and/or zinc. If the sample-mixing bucket has been used for fertilizer or other chemicals, wash it thoroughly before use.

Timing of sampling

Whenever possible, sample three to six months before planting. For field crops, submitting soil samples right after harvest provides plenty of time to plan a liming and fertilization program before the busy growing season. In September and October, the laboratory workload is relatively light, and results can be returned within about two weeks.